

Carrboro Farmers' Market

Locally Grown & Nationally Known

July 17, 2004

Recipe of the Week & featuring Eggplant

from **Sheri Castle** of **Creative Cooking with Sheri Castle**

Eggplant and Ricotta Rolls with Fresh Tomato Sauce

This Italian inspired dish is packed with flavor and takes advantage of the great eggplants and tomatoes in our market. I learned a version of this recipe from Deborah Madison, one of the greatest advocates for farmers markets across the country.

Depending on the type of eggplant you choose, you have options. To make rolls, you'll need to use a large, traditional purple eggplant. You could also layer the slices, filling and sauce in the baking dish as though making lasagna. If you prefer to use the smaller Persian or Asian eggplant varieties from the market, you can spoon a little filling between slices of the eggplant and make stacks.

You can grill the eggplant slices on an outdoor grill, on a grill pan on top of the stove, or even a George Foreman Grilling Machine. For that matter, you can broil the slices on a baking sheet in the oven.

And finally, although freshly made tomato sauce is best, you can substitute your favorite sauce from a jar when time is tight.

2 large globe eggplants (about 3 pounds total)
6 tablespoons olive oil, divided
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 batch Quick Tomato Sauce (see recipe below)
2 cups ricotta cheese
1 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese, divided
3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh basil
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper

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Chapel Hill~Carrboro Farmers' Markets

Carrboro Farmers' Market & Saturdays & March 20 – December 19

Carrboro Farmers' Market & Wednesdays & April 14 – October 20

Southern Village Farmers' Market & Thursdays & May 6 – Late September

1. Prepare an outdoor grill or preheat a grill pan on the stove over high heat.
2. Cut the top and bottom off the eggplants and discard. Cut a thin strip off one side of the eggplants so that it will sit flat on the cutting board. Cut the eggplant lengthwise into about six 1/2-inch-thick slices. You want the slices to be thin enough to roll, but not so thin that they will come apart.
3. Brush both sides of slices with oil and then season with salt and pepper.
4. Grill the slices in batches, turning over once and brushing grilled sides with oil, until golden brown and tender, about 4 minutes, then transfer to a tray. If the slices start to look a little dry, just stack them on top of each other as they finish cooking; the heat will soften them.
5. Preheat the oven to 375°.
6. Spread 1 1/2 cups of the Fresh Tomato Sauce in the bottom of a large baking dish and set it aside.
7. Stir together the ricotta, 3/4 cup Parmesan, basil, 1 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon pepper in a bowl.
8. Divide the cheese mixture among the eggplant slices, using about 3 to 4 tablespoons per slice. Roll up each slice, beginning with a short end and place seam-side-down in the prepared baking dish.
9. Cover the dish with foil and place in the oven to bake until heated through, about 25 to 30 minutes.
10. Heat the remaining tomato sauce and serve the rolls with a little sauce, dusted with the remaining Parmesan cheese.

Makes about 12 rolls, for 4 to 6 servings.

Fresh Tomato Sauce

This is a very quick, rustic sauce that delivers pure tomato flavor. Needless to say, this recipe requires the freshest, most flavorful, fully ripe tomatoes possible. Although most tomato sauces use only olive oil, I like to finish the sauce with a bit of butter.

- 3 pounds ripe tomatoes, cored and diced
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 1 teaspoon sea salt or kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon butter

Place the tomatoes and basil in a 2-quart heavy saucepan. Cover and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. The tomatoes should yield juice quickly, but make sure the pan doesn't get dry and scorch the tomatoes. Cook the tomatoes until they start to break down, about 10 minutes. Break up any large pieces of tomato with a spoon. If the sauce is too thin, continue to cook it over low heat, stirring frequently, until it reaches the desired thickness. Just before serving, stir in the olive oil and butter.

Makes about 2 1/2 cups.

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